

**Spring
2006**



State Senator Liz Brater

The Lansing Report

Governor's Budget Stresses Education and Health Care



Clip & Save

How to Contact Me

Lansing Office

P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
Toll-Free: 1-866-305-0318
Phone: 517-373-2406
Fax: 517-373-5679

E-Mail

senlbrater@senate.
michigan.gov

Website

www.senate.mi.gov/brater

The State of Michigan is facing ongoing challenges in balancing our budget. As we manage the difficult decisions ahead, long-range planning and the needs of our economy, education, and health care system must be our top priorities.

In February, Gov. Granholm proposed a budget for the 2007 fiscal year. Funding for schools and programs for school-age children saw the biggest increases. Under the Governor's proposal, K-12 public schools will see a jump of \$200 in the per-pupil grant. Governor Granholm has also proposed additional funding for after-school tutoring and early-education programs. These initiatives are key to giving our children the tools for success, in college and beyond.

Michigan is home to an impressive higher education system, including the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, and Washtenaw Community College. We must continue to support these institutions, which are essential to Michigan's success in the 21st century economy.

The good-paying, sustainable jobs of tomorrow will require education beyond high school. That's why higher education also saw one of this year's few budget increases. First, all universities will receive a two percent increase for operations. Under the Governor's plan, a new funding formula would enhance cutting-edge research at the University of Michigan, Michigan State, and Wayne State to encourage high-level technological development in Michigan businesses.

As we work to strengthen our economy, expanding access to health care for all Michigan citizens is key to keeping down everyone's health care costs. In addition to new programs for adults, we will continue to fund the MI-Child program which covers 34,000 children.

Making education, at all levels, our top priority will foster job growth and expand opportunity for all Michigan citizens. The proposed budget gives Michigan schools tools to strengthen our K-12 education programs and focuses our higher education system on helping Michigan create a more educated workforce.

Senator Brater Works to Protect Farms, Air, and Water

Preserving farmland and making agriculture economically viable continue to be key goals that the state needs to reach. Now a new threat to Michigan family farms, rural life, drinking water, and air quality has emerged. Every year, corporate animal factories put smaller family farms and rural communities at risk by generating massive amounts of pollution, contaminating Michigan's air and water with animal waste and toxic byproducts.

AG SAFE would strengthen rules governing manure application, increase penalties for manure spills, and restore local authority and scrutiny over factory farms.

Corporate farms create a net loss of employment because they drive local farmers and the merchants that serve them out of business. A study by Iowa State University found that family farms create 23 percent more local revenue per production unit than do corporate farms. Additionally, air and water quality issues have a substantial effect on property values. In some instances, the noxious odors emitted by hog producers have caused property devaluation surpassing 50 percent for

neighbors within a 2-mile radius of the facility. In one case, the Michigan Tax Tribunal determined that a property lost 70 percent of its value due to a neighboring corporate animal factory.

Unmanaged livestock production is one of the biggest threats to community health in rural areas, yet corporate factory farms are not subject to the Clean Water Act, the federal rules and regulations to which all other factories must adhere. The clay-lined lagoons that store manure at corporate farms can be expected to leak up to several thousand gallons per acre per day, contaminating drinking water, spreading disease, and affecting air quality for miles.

Residents living near corporate farms experience increased rates of bronchitis, depression, headaches, diarrhea, shortness of breath, and an array of other ailments. Additionally, birth defects and miscarriages in

communities surrounding factory farms have been linked to high levels of nitrates and other chemicals that are produced when the excessive amounts of chlorine required to "clean" contaminated drinking water mix with organic matter, like fertilizer, in surface water.

Waste produced by corporate factory farms contains antibiotic-resistant bacteria, hormone-laced animal carcass remnants, and chemical byproducts. The manure from these facilities is spread in far greater amounts than crops can use or the soil can absorb. With every rain, unabsorbed manure and other waste flows into nearby lakes, rivers, and streams.

Senate Democrats plan to hold town hall meetings throughout the state this spring to discuss this issue with affected communities.

AG SAFE is supported by Farms without Harm, the Michigan Farmers Union, the Sierra Club, and the Michigan Environmental Council.



Mike Garfield, Director of the Ecology Center in Ann Arbor, joined with Michigan Clean Water Action to honor Senator Liz Brater as the Legislator of the Year.

Governor Highlights 21st Century Jobs Fund in State of State Address

In this year's State of the State Address, Governor Granholm discussed the importance of completing the work we have begun to strengthen Michigan's ability to protect and attract good-paying jobs. One of the key projects the Governor outlined is the 21st Century Jobs Fund, a plan to invest in creating businesses, especially alternative energy companies that can end our reliance on foreign oil and diversify Michigan's economy.

This new research-based investment calls for an unprecedented \$600 million investment in new technology-oriented businesses for Michigan. In addition to alternative energy technology, high-tech growth areas earmarked for support from the 21st Century Jobs Fund include homeland security, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing technology. Through grants and loans, the 21st Century Jobs Fund will focus in three areas:

- Encouraging the development and commercialization of competitive-edge technologies

- Increasing capital investment activity
- Increasing commercial lending activity.

The 21st Century Jobs Fund is a special opportunity for Washtenaw County. This program is well-suited to the strengths of our colleges and universities and our research and development-based economy.

In January, entrepreneurs and business leaders from our area participated in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Informational Tour of the 21st Century Jobs Fund in Ann Arbor. MEDC did a special presentation on the program's request for proposals, proposal due dates, peer review process, eligibility requirements, funding categories, and evaluation criteria to encourage and prepare applicants from Washtenaw County, the university community, and surrounding areas.

For more information, visit www.michigan.org.

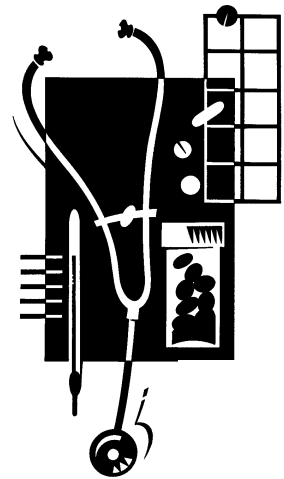
Governor Introduces Health Care Plan

Governor Granholm has proposed the Michigan First Health Care plan, which will expand affordable health

coverage to more than half a million people who do not currently have insurance. The program will reduce the cost of health care for all Michigan residents. It

will decrease uncompensated care costs and decrease emergency room use by encouraging participants to manage health problems before they become severe.

Michigan First is similar to Medicaid and requires financial contributions on the part of the participant on a sliding scale proportional to income. It is, in essence, a state-organized group purchasing plan. It provides small business, the self-employed, and other individuals who do not get health insurance through work but do not qualify for Medicaid an opportunity to purchase insurance at a more affordable rate. The program operates under the principles of managed care, and a variety of plans will be available.



Want to Know More?



Mailing funds are limited and I would like to keep in touch with you. Please take a minute to e-mail me at senlbrater@senate.michigan.gov and send me your e-mail address so I can send you legislative updates. If you don't have e-mail, please call my toll-free number to receive updates by mail. Thank you!



State Senator **Liz Brater**

P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536



PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANSING, MI
PERMIT NO. 1200

Governor Signs Water Withdrawal Package

In February, Governor Granholm signed into law long-awaited water withdrawal legislation.

These new laws serve as a good first step toward improving protection of Michigan's water resources by creating guidelines and oversight for water use and withdrawal.

Last year and again earlier this year, Senator Brater introduced the Water Legacy Act. When it became apparent that the Majority was not going to address the issue through her proposed bills, Senator Brater and her Senate Democratic colleagues introduced an alternative package that would further Michigan's water withdrawal protections. Under public pressure, the Majority responded with their own water

withdrawal legislation, which were the bills eventually taken up in the Senate.

Senate Democrats successfully presented amendments in the committee process to strengthen these bills.

The new laws enhance existing law by:

- Creating a new permit process for large quantity withdrawals
- Providing a dispute resolution process so that local communities can resolve water conflicts

- Developing a standard to protect water resources from excessive water withdrawals.

Unfortunately, the new laws do not address the contentious issue of shipping bottled water outside of the Great Lakes Basin. Senator Brater offered an amendment to give Michigan the ability to prevent these types of withdrawals, but it did not pass. She will continue to pursue legislation to eliminate exemptions for the bottled water industry.



Senator Liz Brater joins Governor Jennifer Granholm at the bill signing for Senate Bill 799. The new law, now Public Act 255 of 2005, would allow state water pollution funds to be used for project planning for sewage treatment works, stormwater treatment, and non-point source pollution projects.